

A diver emerges from behind an immense orange seafan that is thriving in Fiji's nutrient rich currents.

*Diving Freedom—Fiji*  
*Forbes*  
*Style*



TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JACK & SUE DRAFAHL

The steep wall started at 30 feet, dropped to 120 and then gently slid into the deep blue. At the top it was adorned with every type of hard coral imaginable. It seemed to stretch as far as the eye could see. Soft corals in every color of the rainbow dominated the steep face of the wall.



As we glided down, we looked under a reef overhang and found a couple of lionfish that were willing models for our cameras. Just then we noticed the divemaster busily sifting through the rubble pile at the bottom of a gully. He motioned to us and, when we joined him, he showed us a golden nudibranch that was smaller than a pencil eraser. We moved closer to the rubble pile and scanned the surface. Some rubble began to move as a hermit crab emerged. The reef was teeming with life from top to bottom.

As we moved from gully to steep incline and back to gully we filled our cameras with images. With our film spent, we glanced at our gauges and decided to make our way to the surface. Luckily, we didn't have to use much of our precious air making our way back to the boat. Through the clear water we could see the boat waiting for us, ready to pick us up when we broke the surface. What luxury! Welcome to diving freedom—Fiji Forbes style.

Fiji Forbes can be found on Laucala (pronounced LA-THAH-la), a small 3,000 acre island off the northeast corner of Taveuni. Originally the island escape for publisher Malcolm Forbes and his guests, it now can be your home away from home. It features seven *bures* (Fijian thatched cottages) that line the shore, each with ample privacy. There are one and two bedroom *bures*, each with a large living room, fully stocked kitchen and comfortable dining area.

Each morning when we woke, our "bure girl" was already there, preparing our breakfast of fresh fruit, banana pancakes and juice. We just sat back, sipped our coffee and enjoyed the pleasure of the morning light. What a way to start a day in paradise!

One thing the folks at Fiji Forbes insist upon is that you have it your way. You can dive whenever you want and as much as you desire. You can dine in the luxury of the Plantation House or the privacy of your own *bure*. There is no set schedule. You can try your luck at some of the excellent sportfishing or you can dive in the morning and tour the island in the afternoon. You can enjoy some of the extensive watersports offered, such as waterskiing, Hobie Cat sailboards, windsurfing, kayaking or snorkeling. Private picnic luncheons in the Tree House overlooking the sea can be arranged or you can take some time to tour the treasures at Malcolm Forbes' house on the hill. Of course, you can always relax and do as little as you like. Remember, we said, "Have it your way."

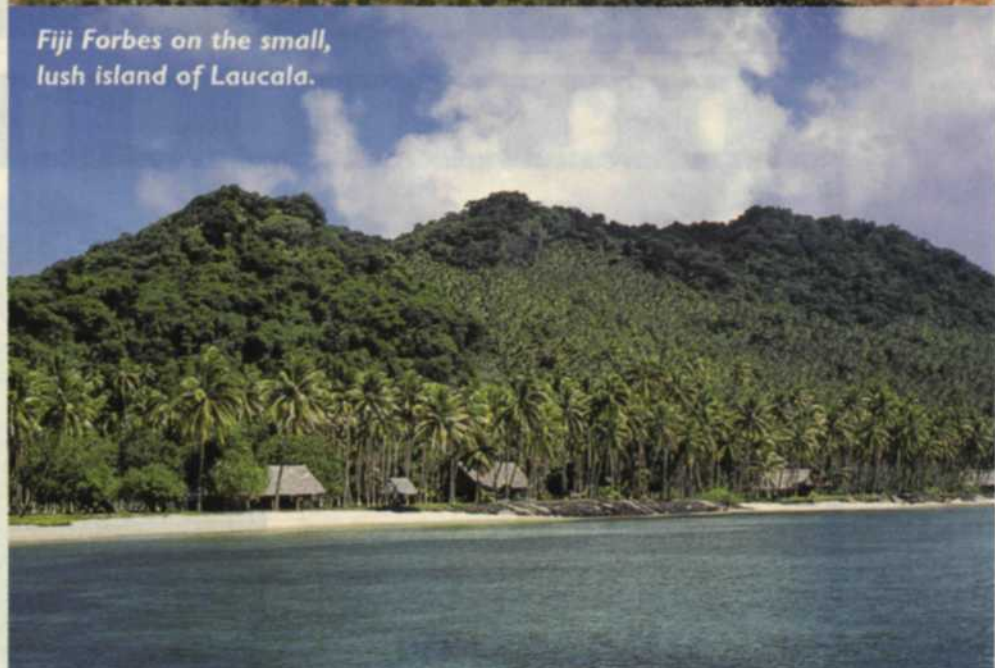
Fiji Forbes is an all-inclusive resort, which means everything is included in one tariff. All your food, drink, laundry services, diving and deepsea fishing are included in the pack-



A private bure facing the sea.



Saddled Puffer  
(*Canthigaster valentini*)



Fiji Forbes on the small, lush island of Laucala.



Tomato Anemonefish  
(*Amphiprion frenatus*)





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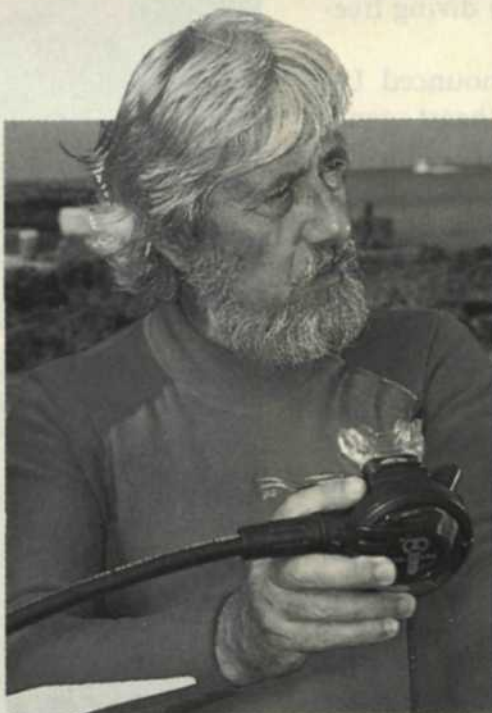


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## DIVING FREEDOM— FIJI FORBES STYLE

age price. What more could you ask for?

Divers are treated marvelously on Laucala. Whenever you want to dive, tell the guys at the dive shop and it will all be arranged. There are several dive boats so the groups are always small. All your gear will be set up for the dive; washed, dried and made ready for the next day's diving afterward. Fiji Forbes also offers a full assortment of dive equipment and wetsuits for use during your stay.

There are more than 30 dive sites that offer varied adventures from shallow bommies to deep lush walls; most are only a short boat ride away. One of our favorites is **Boathouse Reef**, just under the pier. It offers many interesting critters at depths from 5 to 50 feet, which makes it an excellent night dive. All you

### GETTING THERE

Flights to Fiji are available through Air Pacific and Qantas. Their nonstop flights from Los Angeles to Fiji's international airport in Nadi take approximately 10 hours. The outer islands are reached via either Air Fiji or Sunflower Airlines.

**Air Pacific**  
(800) 227-4446

**Qantas Airways**  
(800) 227-4500

**Air Fiji**  
(888) FLI-FIJI (in U.S.)

**Sunflower Airlines**  
(888) DIVE FIJI (in U.S.)

have to do is sit on the dock and drop over the edge. Night diving doesn't get much easier than this!

There are many swim-throughs to explore, such as the one at **Bonnie's Boulders**. Other sites feature one main attraction, such as **Firewalk**, carpeted with Fire Coral; **Starfish Alley**, which has a large population of starfish; and **Anemone Reef**, home to large colonies of anemones and their resident clownfish. Of course, all these sites have many little critters nestled in the coral cracks, just waiting for your macro lens. Make sure you have your wide angle lens ready as the nearby blue waters often feature Eagle Rays, Mantas and sharks.

One of the longer boat rides takes divers to the **Purple Wall**, a great drift dive when the tides are flowing. Here you will find thousands of purple soft corals open and feeding in all their splendor. The crinoids and seafans wave in the fast flowing waters, the perfect subjects for our cameras.

Ric and Carol West offer E-6 process-



ing, so you can quickly see your photo results. They also offer video footage as a souvenir of your U/W adventures.

You're probably already impressed with Fiji Forbes, but we've saved the best for last. The friendliness and warm hospitality of the Fijian people are not to be missed. A festive *meke* of song and dance is a memory you will cherish forever. Fijians make you feel welcome from the first shout of "*Bula*" to the tearful final chorus of *Isa Lei*, the Fijian farewell song.

Come visit the Fijian people and have it your way in Fiji Forbes' paradise. For further information, contact Fiji Forbes Laucala, P.O. Box 149, Fort Garland, Colorado 81133; (800) FORBES-5 or (719) 379-3263; fax (719) 379-3266. 🐟

### THRILL RIDE

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he said. "You can't find a better value in dive travel anywhere in the world." He was traveling with a group of divers that included several who were newly certified, as well as experienced divers. Everyone agreed that Scuba Club Cozumel was an excellent choice. Shirley Sulpizio was completing her open water certification on the trip and was delighted with the quality of the service. "Plus," she said, "on the boats I can go at my own speed, so I feel comfortable in the water."

Holly Sullivan, another diver in the Bamboo Reef group, liked the friendly atmosphere and "hacienda" style of architecture. "Everything is convenient for divers, but also very relaxing," she said. "Take the meals, for instance. The food is excellent and the restaurants are so inviting. And, on top of that, the meal service is timed to mesh with the dive schedule!"

Tim Palm was here with dive partner Becky Rosa for his 12th visit. He told me he had checked out other places in Cozumel but keeps coming back to Scuba Club Cozumel because it has the best combination of features and is the most professionally run. That's something I noticed about Scuba Club Cozumel, too. Everything is spotless and well organized. Take a look in the shop at Scuba Cozumel, the on-site PADI Five Star facility. You'll see regulators, BCs and other dive equipment hanging carefully in racks or bins—everything in its place and impeccably clean. The equipment is top-of-the-line and obviously a strict preventive maintenance program is in place. The repair bench looks like a model for a factory school, with all the tools and parts ready at hand. In the huge compressor room four air compressors, two of them 50 cubic feet per minute units, fill 80 and 63 cubic foot aluminum tanks through five stage filter

systems. The entire facility looks like it would pass a drill sergeant's white glove inspection.

The same applies to the boats, which are all diesel powered and well equipped. Custom designed with safety and comfort in mind, the boats all feature marine heads, seating in the shade or sun, two stable dive ladders, radios, first aid kits and emergency oxygen. Camera tables and rinse barrels are available and chilled juice is served between dives.

Tim, Becky and I teamed up aboard *Reef Star*, the largest of the club's dive boats, for a dive on **Santa Rosa Wall**. With

12 people aboard, we were echoing around with space to spare. Getting in the water was a snap, thanks to the multiple entry points on the boat. Drift diving is the name of the game in Cozumel and that's how Scuba Club Cozumel runs things as well so we joined our divemaster and headed over the edge of the wall.

Santa Rosa just gets more interesting as you go along. The top of the wall is around 50 feet and it drops almost vertically from there. Behind the reef is a sandy flat speckled with small coral heads. Most of the action is around the lip of the reef, where the coral towers over

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